



## Regionalism Reaffirmed

**THE ATTACK ON LEVIATHAN.** By Donald Davidson. Peter Smith. \$5.50.

*When Donald Davidson's "Attack on Leviathan" was published 25 years ago, it was reviewed by Richmond Croom Beatty, editor of this page from 1956 to 1961.*

*Because the review remains as pertinent and topical now as it was then, portions of it are reprinted here on the occasion of the reissue of this extremely rare book.*

This volume is a collection of 17 essays. The book, as a whole, suggests a remarkable unity; each study, that is, may in a sense be termed an examination of a separate facet of a general and insistent problem—the problem of the kind of America we want and the conditions under which that problem is likely to be solved.

**Its major tenet is that the United States are not unified but diverse in their aspirations and interests.**

This thesis stands in implacable opposition to the glorious oneness envisioned by men like Charles A. Beard and, to a lesser extent, by A. M. Schlesinger (senior). These latter chroniclers of the American scene picture the development of the country as only an incidental phase in the emergence of the world state.

The brisk Northeastern manufacturing system, octopus like, they say, is reaching out its tentacles in all directions; fundamental economic and political differences are fast vanishing.

What the prophets who sound this cheerful note forget is simply that the sections are never in full agreement politically, are constantly at war economically, and are socially and in their folk ways so diverse as to make the term American an almost meaningless abstraction.

**IT IS FROM** this center of emphasis, an emphasis upon the diversity of America, that Mr. Davidson surveys the American scene, past and present. The essays which compose the book reveal a truly extraordinary, at times an almost amazing insight into the economics, politics, literature, sociology—in short into the cul-

tural history—of this country.

Mr. Davidson has not been content to assume the comfortable role of the scholar who bewildered by the complexity of contemporary life, shuts his eyes to it by retiring into a specialty which deals only with the past. His point of view, that is to say, is philosophical in the valid sense of the term: he would relate the complexities of his time to a central and ordering principle.

What he wishes to see prevail in the nation may be stated simply enough.

He wishes to see a kind of government in which the various regions of America—the Northeast, the South, the Middlewest, the Southwest, and the Far West—are allowed to realize fully their cultural diversities and, within reason, their political and economic destinies.

He does not wish to see one section dominate another, or

reduce another to the status of a colonial dependency, whether in the name of stark exploitation or under the thin guise of eradicating "backwardness." He wants to see reasserted, in brief, a traditional American principle that has been suffered, in the name of material progress, to go neglected to our own grave risk.

The book is as stimulating and as instructive to study as it is difficult to summarize. Throughout its pages runs that interplay of humor and good sense which Mr. Davidson's readers have learned to expect in his prose.

But its value is to be found chiefly in the fact that, in human terms, "The Attack on Leviathan" represents an analysis of the social problems of the country which is convincingly in line with the traditions of American history. We have long needed badly such a searching and significant work.